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They Fight the Cold War Under Cover

By DONALD ROBINSON

Here's the story of what our new cloak-and-dagger outfit, the Central Intelligence Agency, is doing to keep our secrets—and learn the secrets of other nations. It comes from those who serve in the little-known organization.

LATE last spring, Lt. Col. J. D. Tassoyev, Soviet Guards Officer, was the central figure in a melodrama of international intrigue that rocketed onto the front page of almost every newspaper from Moscow to San Francisco. At the time, there were two versions to the incident.

Tass, the official U.S.S.R. news agency, charged that Tassoyev was kidnaped from Bremen to London, imprisoned and tortured by the British Secret Service in an effort to make him abandon his country's service.

Only because "a scandal was brewing," Tass said, did the British Government ultimately release the colonel to Soviet authorities.

"The gentleman was here in England of his own free will," countered the British Foreign Office. "He left because he was asked to leave."

The American intelligence officers could fill in the missing chunks of both stories. They could tell a tale of spy and counterspy that would sound like a movie thriller. It would be a valuable account, too, for it would prove that, despite blundering at high levels and abrasive frictions between agencies of our own Government, the United States at last has the makings of an effective intelligence system.

Here is the story the United States intelligence officers could tell. It comes from official United States Government sources.

Colonel Tassoyev approached American agents in Bremen last April with an offer to desert the Soviet Army. According to the report sent Washington, the colonel spoke at length about his hatred of communism, his yearning for democracy. He hinted that he had a large stock of secrets to divulge.

Such an offer was nothing new to the United States intelligence men. Scores of Red Army men, including at least one Russian lieutenant general, have recently run out on Stalin. Many have given valuable information. But the American agents told Washington that they were not impressed with Tassoyev. There was something phony about him. In their radioed report to Washington, the Americans said point-blank that Tassoyev was a plant. Washington directed that they have nothing to do with him.

The American agents didn't, but the British Secret Service did! Tassoyev went to the British after the Americans shut the door in his face. The British took him at his word and flew him to England in Field Marshal Montgomery's own plane.



Director of the new outfit, Rear Admiral R. H. Hillenkoetter avoids hiring "gumshoe artists."

In London, the British lodged the colonel in a comfortable six-room apartment and set to work examining him. They even had one of their young woman operatives, a blonde named Betty Wiggin, on hand to help. To their dismay, as Washington heard the story, the colonel refused to answer any questions. Instead, he kept asking questions. He tried to probe into the operations of the Allied intelligence services. He wanted to know about the "Freedom Route" that other Russian defectors had followed.

When the British declined to oblige him, Colonel Tassoyev attempted a getaway. He broke out of the West Kensington apartment and ran to near-by Olympia Hall, London's exposition center. Bursting in on the crowds there, the colonel shouted that he had been kidnaped and demanded to be put in touch with the Soviet Embassy. A public scene was in the making, but an imperturbable London bobby, on duty in the hall, managed to smother it. He calmly